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22.09.2010

Conference to identify local strategies to cope with the largest public sector deficits since World War II

Date: 23-24 September 2010

Place: Hotel Rixos Libertas, Dubrovnik, Croatia

Organised by the Council of Europe, the United Nations Development Programme/Bratislava Regional Centre (UNDP/BRC), the OSCE and the Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative of the Open Society Institute (LGI)

Description: In the wake of the international financial crisis, European countries are confronting the deepest cuts to public service budgets since the Second World War. Exacerbated by problems of climate change and ageing populations, local governments need to be more efficient and improve management of public expenditure.

Conference debates will identify key challenges and solutions on the best ways to improve the environment for and practice of inter-municipal co-operation. Participants – who include some 80 representatives from the host organisations, including ministers, state secretaries, deputy ministers, senior officials from the ministries responsible for local and regional government, and others – are expected to agree a final declaration acknowledging the "best practice identified" and making suggestions for further action.

The two-day conference – **open to the press** – will focus on "Intermunicipal Co-operation" (IMC), a cooperation of municipalities seen as a key local government reform strategy to raise the quality of public services and bring efficiency and effectiveness in administrations. It has proven particularly useful for small local and regional authorities where capacity and resources are often limited.

The conference opens at 9 am Thursday 23 September with statements from:

- *Davorin Mlakar, Minister of Public Administration, Croatia*
- *Andro Vlahušić, Mayor of the City of Dubrovnik*
- *Dubravka Šuica, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe*
- *Childerik Schaapveld, Director of Democratic Institutions, Council of Europe*
- *Jenz Wandel, Director, UNDP Regional Centre for Europe and CIS*

[Programme of the conference](#)

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Note for editors

The Council of Europe, the UNDP/BRC, the OSCE and the LGI have developed programmes to help national authorities improve the way they exercise public authority and the services they deliver to citizens. Specific programmes on inter-municipal co-operation are being implemented in several countries.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.

The Council of Europe's [European Charter of Local Self-Government](#), for example, sets out the principles that underpin local democracy. The Council of Europe has prepared and launched a [Strategy on Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level](#). The latter's key principles cover sustainability and long-term orientation, responsiveness, efficiency and effectiveness and sound financial management. These factors are all closely related to inter-municipal co-operation.

The [European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy](#) (CDLR) of the Council of Europe has addressed a number of issues relevant to inter-municipal co-operation, and issued a handbook of good practice for inter-municipal co-operation intended for use by both central and local authorities. Committee of Ministers' Recommendation (2004)12 on the processes of reform of boundaries and/or structure of local and regional authorities is also relevant in this respect.